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Resources, Assets, and Strengths Among Successful Diverse Students: Understanding the Contributions of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program (Readings on Equal Education, Vol. 23)

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Review of *Resources, Assets, and Strengths among Successful Diverse Students: Understanding the Contributions of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program (Readings on Equal Education, Vol. 23)*, edited by William T. Trent and Edward P. St. John. AMS Press, Inc., 2008. 286 pp. \$137.50 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-404-10123-7.

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Disciplines

Disability and Equity in Education | Education | Educational Administration and Supervision | Higher Education

Comments

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Book Reviews

Resources, Assets, and Strengths among Successful Diverse Students: Understanding the Contributions of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program (Readings on Equal Education, Vol. 23), edited by William T. Trent and Edward P. St. John. AMS Press, Inc., 2008. 286 pp. \$137.50 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-404-10123-7.

LAURA W. PERNA, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania

Resources, assets, and strengths among successful diverse students: Understanding the contributions of the Gates Millennium Scholars Program offers valuable insights for policymakers, administrators, and researchers who are interested in understanding how to improve postsecondary educational attainment of low-income, high-achieving students of color. The volume is edited by two of the nation's foremost scholars on this topic: William T. Trent, professor of educational policy studies and sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Edward P. St. John, Algo D. Henderson Collegiate Professor of Education at the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education.

Building on an earlier volume in the *Readings on Equal Education* series (St. John, 2005), the 11 chapters in this volume examine the contribution of the GMS program to the academic and social experiences of low-income, high-achieving minority students. The final chapter, written by the editors, identifies six "emergent understandings" and four "lessons learned" from the volume. The other 10 chapters are contributed by an impressive group of higher education researchers representing diverse career stages, institutional affiliations, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Each chapter is grounded in a review of relevant research, includes attention to the source of data and analytic methods, and presents findings, conclusions, and directions for future research.

Although focused specifically on the GMS program, the volume offers insights for other efforts designed to improve the educational attainment of low-income, high-achieving students of color. First, the volume's chapters consistently suggest that addressing the financial needs and concerns of this population increases educational opportunities by, for example, expanding recipients' college choices. By reducing the need to work and consequently increasing the availability of "free" time, addressing students' financial need also appears to promote GMS-recipients' engagement in academic, social, and community activities.

While suggesting the benefits of addressing financial concerns, however, the research design does not control for other explanations for the observed relationships, particularly differences between GMS recipients and non-recipients in the motivation to succeed. The design also does not disentangle the effects on

student outcomes of the GMS scholarship from other program components. Established with a \$1 billion grant in 1999 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the GMS program provides financial support for undergraduate and graduate study as well as activities to promote recipients' academic and professional development. In chapter 8, St. John acknowledges and mitigates the selection problem by offering a theoretical rationale for why and how finances are related to students' academic success.

Second, the volume suggests the importance to the academic success of low-income, high-achieving students of color not only of the scholarship component of GMS, but also of other efforts. Trent and co-authors Dawn Owens Nicholson and Mary E. M. McKillip (chapter 1) conclude from their descriptive analyses that the GMS program has effectively reached a population that is infrequently considered: low-income, high-achieving minority students attending majority-minority high schools. Using a two-level hierarchical logistic regression model, Krystal Williams, Shouping Hu, and St. John (chapter 7) show that the college choices of low-income, high-achieving African American students increase with the availability of state grant aid. Drawing on focus group data and her own experiences as a GMS recipient, Malisa Lee suggests the role of mentors in promoting the attainment of low-income minority students. Although the volume gives little attention to the more commonly recognized barriers to attainment associated with inadequate academic and counseling resources in the high schools low-income minority students attend, the descriptive data in other chapters suggest the need to consider how other non-financial forces, including immigration status and family responsibilities, may also influence aid recipients' postsecondary educational experiences.

Third, the volume also illustrates that, even within the seemingly well-defined population of "low-income, high-achieving minority students," characteristics and experiences vary across racial/ethnic groups. Like many previous studies, small sample sizes limit examinations of the diversity within particular racial/ethnic groups. Nonetheless, the separate racial/ethnic profiles provided in chapters 2 through 5 and the cross racial/ethnic analyses in chapters 6 and 9 illustrate similarities and differences in the background characteristics and academic experiences of low-income, high-achieving students of different racial/ethnic groups. (Chapters 2 through 5 describe the relationship between receiving GMS and various postsecondary educational experiences for each of four racial/ethnic groups, with one chapter for each of the following groups: African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and American Indian and Alaska Natives.)

Finally, the volume illustrates the value of constructing and implementing a comprehensive research and evaluation design when a program is first implemented. The volume's chapters draw primarily on longitudinal survey data collected by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) from GMS recipients and non-recipients and focus group data from GMS recipients collected by the McKenzie Group; these data collection efforts were supported by the Gates Foundation. These rich and multi-faceted data enable the volume's authors to generate a comprehensive assessment of GMS-recipients' characteristics and experiences. Also noteworthy are the efforts of some chapter authors to integrate data from other sources to expand the richness of the available data and enhance their analyses. For example, Trent and colleagues incorporate data

from the Common Core of Data in their examination of the racial/ethnic composition of high schools attended by GMS recipients (chapter 1). Sylvia Hurtado, Victor Saenz, and Luciana Dar (chapter 9) use data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) to identify an additional control group. Other researchers should use these as examples for considering ways to build in connections with other data sources in order to reduce the burden and expense of data collection efforts and maximize the utility of the collected data.

Several recent reports underscore the need to improve the educational attainment of our nation's young adults (e.g., SHEEO, 2008). This volume suggests the promise of a program like GMS for promoting the postsecondary academic success of one important but underserved segment of this population: low-income, high-achieving students of color. Policymakers, campus administrators, and educational researchers alike will benefit from this volume's perspectives and insights.

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Organizing Higher Education for Collaboration: A Guide for Campus Leaders

by Adrianna J. Kezar and Jaime Lester.

Jossey-Bass, 2009. 290 pp. \$40.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-470-17936-9.

JOHN H. SCHUH, Iowa State University

Adrianna Kezar and Jamie Lester have prepared a splendid volume that reports on how colleges and universities might go about organizing themselves to enhance collaboration. The specific purposes of the book are “(1) to describe the benefits, necessity and barriers of collaborative work in higher education, (2) provoke a vision for what collaborative postsecondary institution looks like, and (3) guide educational leaders in efforts to redesign their campuses for collaborative work by presenting the results of a research study of campuses that have been successful in recreating their environments to support collaboration” (pp. xii–xiii). They are successful in achieving their purposes and this book promises to be an excellent reference as institutional leaders and faculty move in the direction of adopting collaborative practices as the authors suggest will occur in future administrative practice.

Their study is in the methodological tradition of such volumes as *Involving Colleges* (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991), and *Achieving and Sustaining Institu-*